

COUNCIL POLICY**CURRENT**

SUBJECT: PANHANDLE LOTS AND ACCESS EASEMENTS
POLICY NO.: 600-38
EFFECTIVE DATE: June 8, 1992

BACKGROUND:

Section 102.0413 of the Municipal Code allows a variance from the minimum requirements of the various zones described under Chapter 10, Article 1 of the code. Such a variance requires that there be “special circumstances or conditions affecting the property in question and that such variance will not be materially detrimental to the general welfare of adjacent persons or property”. Under this procedure, a variance may be requested in conjunction with a tentative map to permit a substandard frontage, “panhandle” lot. Generally, a “panhandle” lot is a parcel with a narrow strip of land (15 to 20 feet in width) providing direct frontage and access to a dedicated street with the developable portion of the lot lying behind another lot. Also, variances may be granted under this section to allow the creation of an access easement through the recordation of a final map and establishes an area where the owner of one lot may legally cross a lot owned by another individual.

Sec. 101.0900, Planned Residential Developments (PRD) and Sec. 101.0930, Planned Infill Residential Developments (PIRD) of the Municipal Code allow the creation of “panhandle” lots and access easements with a PRD or PIRD permit. These approaches are allowed because of the flexibility given by the PRD or PIRD ordinances and do not require a variance. These applications allow the design of the project to be reviewed, including a site plan, landscaping, parking, driveways, etc.

PURPOSE:

To provide criteria to evaluate tentative maps proposing a “panhandle” lot(s) and/or an access easement(s).

POLICY:

It is the policy of the City Council to only grant variances to allow “panhandle” lots and access easements when special circumstances exist as required by Sec. 102.0413 of the Municipal Code or under a PRD or PIRD permit. “Panhandle” lots or access easements should primarily be used as a vehicle to improve the environment through the preservation of natural features such as trees, rock outcroppings and topographic features. When being proposed under a PRD or PIRD, the following criteria must be followed:

1. Avoid adjacently situated driveways - This criteria would minimize the unsightliness of an excessive amount of pavement.
2. Provide sufficient parking areas between driveways - When the space between driveways is within a ten and fifteen foot range, people are encouraged to park there. This results in an inconvenient and potentially unsafe situation because the cars “hang over” into the driveway area.

3. Provide greater width for “panhandle” or access easement area - With the additional space, the driveways can be slightly meandered to minimize the visual impact of the paved area from the street. This impact can be further reduced through the placement of landscaping to further reduce the negative impact of the driveway. Also, a greater openness with low profile landscaping will provide greater visibility to a rear unit for the police and would be a discouragement to crime.
4. Encourage the use of noise walls to increase auditory privacy between residential units and driveway areas - In some instances, driveways will need to be placed in proximity to residential units, including bedrooms and a solid masonry wall would help ameliorate potential noise.
5. Design the buildings and outdoor areas to maximize visual and auditory privacy - Consideration should be given to the placement of the residential units as well as outdoor spaces to ensure privacy between different homes. Also, solid walls can be used to increase privacy.
6. Provide vehicular turnarounds for longer driveways - To eliminate the necessity of lengthy “backups,” encourage areas where automobiles can be turned around, so as to facilitate the forward exiting of vehicles. This would ensure a safer situation because of the hazards of injuring someone while “backing up,” particularly into a busy street.
7. Consider additional on-site parking for units removed from the street - This will help compensate for any potential loss of parking on the street. However, additional spaces should be “broken up” and screened with landscaping to lessen the visual impacts.

HISTORY:

Adopted by Resolution R-280088 06/08/1992